

Alternative 2: Enhanced Local and State Management

INTRODUCTION

Alternative 2 provides a menu of programs and tools that could be pursued in the local community to protect the significant resources of the study area. This set of options was developed in response to public comments received by the NPS, to assist the local community in considering possible future actions. These programs offer the potential to enhance and strengthen the ongoing resource conservation and public education and enjoyment efforts of private landowners, public land managers, and non-profit conservation organizations.

Alternative 2, if fully implemented, could protect the resources of the Gaviota Coast for the benefit of future generations by providing additional incentives for private land conservation, funds for public and private acquisition of land and conservation easements, and public access to the coast.

It is assumed that Alternative 2 covers a long time frame. Some of the actions presented may be able to be implemented quickly, others may take longer, and the community may choose not to implement certain elements. While economic conditions currently limit the potential for increased local, state and federal funding for conservation and recreation, feasibility may change as conditions change in the future. Creative new approaches to funding may be developed where there is a strong community commitment to action.

The conservation actions of Alternative 2 are organized under the following categories:

1. Private land stewardship
2. Non-profit conservation activities
3. Agricultural land conservation
4. Regulatory and incentive programs (local, state and federal)
5. Public land management and access
6. Vandenberg AFB

1. PRIVATE LAND STEWARDSHIP

Under Alternative 2, private landowners could take additional individual and cooperative action to protect the resources on and around their land.

Develop voluntary watershed management initiatives. Landowners and other stakeholders in the various watersheds along the Gaviota Coast could establish watershed partnerships and work cooperatively to develop and implement watershed protection measures. Between the south edge of Vandenberg AFB and Coal Oil Point, there is only one coordinated effort to protect coastal watersheds, at Gaviota Creek. A new watershed partnership could bring together agricultural interests, landowners, public land and resource managers, and other resource conservation advocates to identify voluntary measures that can be taken to assess current resource conditions, improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, protect critical species habitat, and other measures to enhance coastal and aquatic ecosystems. The Cachuma Resource Conservation District may be able to assist with this initiative, or facilitate a Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) process.

Take advantage, as appropriate, of non-profit and governmental programs that support private stewardship. Numerous non-profit and governmental programs exist, and others could be developed, to support the conservation efforts of private landowners. Private landowners could take greater advantage of the existing programs as described under Alternative 1, and they could



coastal view, NPS photo

pursue additional measures to support resource conservation. Different activities will be appropriate and useful for different landowners, and for different types of land and resources. Among the actions that could be taken by private landowners are:

- Landowners could sell or development rights to non-profit or governmental organizations, in order to ensure that their land will not be inappropriately developed in the future. The timing of such sales and donations can be arranged to meet each landowner's financial, tax, inheritance, and other personal needs and wishes.
- Landowners could enroll or continue to stay enrolled in Williamson Act or "Super Williamson Act" contracts.
- Landowners who wish to sell their land could give preference to conservation-oriented buyers – individual, land trust, or governmental.
- Farmers and ranchers could take additional action, either on their own or with various incentive programs, to provide vegetative cover and riparian buffers, protect sensitive species, plant trees, and protect cultural resources.
- Landowners could work with public agencies to provide appropriate public trail or access easements through their land, in ways that minimize impacts on the landowner, or meet other landowner needs.



Cojo Ranch, NPS photo

- Landowners could provide recreation facilities and services, on a for-profit or voluntary basis.
- Landowners could inventory and document significant cultural and natural resources on their properties, or allow independent researchers to do so. Significant resources could be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or as National Natural Landmarks. Listed sites are eligible for technical and management assistance from a number of agencies and organizations.

2. NON-PROFIT CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

Under Alternative 2, non-profit organizations could partner to develop new programs and pursue new funding sources and programs in order to enhance their resource conservation capabilities.

Work to develop new sources of funding for land and resource conservation funding. The capability of non-profit organizations, including land trusts, to participate in the conservation of land and resources along the Gaviota Coast could be enhanced through additional funding. Enhanced public and private funding for non-profit conservation action provides a way for the community's resource conservation goals to be achieved without additional governmental management of resources. Some of the actions listed in other sections below (agricultural land conservation, regulatory and incentive programs) could also provide funding for enhanced non-profit conservation action.

Establish a revolving fund for land and easement acquisition. A nonprofit land trust, resource conservation district, or governmental entity (such as an open space district) could establish a revolving loan fund to purchase significant lands, place protective easements on those properties, and resell them to replenish the revolving fund. Sources of start-up funding could include state or federal appropriations, bond acts, the Coastal Resource Enhancement Fund, or private donations.

Use of such a revolving fund would allow land acquisition dollars to be used multiple times, while enhancing the capability of non-profit land trusts to make competitive offers for land that is for sale. The revolving fund would allow landowners who want to sell to do so, and keep land in private ownership. This type of program would probably allow some development to occur in the study area, but at a reduced density from what zoning would allow. It would also encourage the transfer of available land to conservation-minded buyers, whether for residential or agricultural purposes. It would not force anyone to sell their land.

3. AGRICULTURAL LAND CONSERVATION

Under Alternative 2, additional measures could be taken to support agricultural land conservation and to enhance the viability of the area's farming and ranching operations.

Seek modifications to Agricultural Preserve and Farmland Security Zone programs to increase effectiveness at retaining private agricultural land. The County and agricultural interests could work with the State Department of Conservation to seek changes in the Farmland Security Zone legislation to allow grazing land to be eligible for the 20 year Farmland Security Zone contracts. Currently the legislation limits Farmland Security Zones to prime or unique farmland and farmland of statewide significance or local importance.

The upcoming county review of its Agricultural Preserve (Williamson Act) program and implementing Uniform Rules could focus not only on this program's limits on land development, but also on keeping this program an attractive and viable program for active farmers and ranchers.

The county, landowners and open space advocates could work with the State Department of Conservation to seek changes in the Agricultural Preserve legislation to enable the creation of open space preserves, with contracts and incentives similar to those in the Agricultural Preserve (Williamson Act) program.

4. REGULATORY AND INCENTIVE PROGRAMS (LOCAL, STATE, FEDERAL)

Under Alternative 2 the County Board of Supervisors and the voters could strengthen certain programs and develop new programs to support resource conservation along the Gaviota Coast.

Strengthen existing zoning by limiting upzoning. Voter initiatives in Ventura and Napa Counties, California and in Portland, Oregon have strengthened existing agricultural, open space, rural or rural residential zoning by requiring voter approval to rezone such lands for development or urban use. Such an initiative would make it more difficult to change existing zoning.

Santa Barbara County could establish such a program for the county as a whole, or for a specific area of concern, such as the Gaviota Coast. It could be structured to ensure respect for property rights, and to increase consistency and long term reliability of zoning regulations. An initiative requiring voter approval of upzoning has been proposed in the past in Santa Barbara County, but did not gain enough support to be enacted.



City of Goleta, © Rich Reid / Colors of Nature

Strengthen zoning by tightening definitions.

The agricultural zoning in the study area allows other related land uses if a conditional use permit is obtained.²⁶ Uses that may be conditionally permitted include low intensity recreational development such as hiking trails, public riding stables, recreational camps, campgrounds, retreats and guest ranches; wineries; facilities for processing horticultural and agricultural products; exploration and production of offshore oil and gas. Under Alternative 2, the County Board of Supervisors could tighten these provisions to ensure that major facilities that are not in character with the rural setting (for example golf courses and large commercial facilities) are not allowed. The County could modify the Comprehensive Plan for the Gaviota area to include an overlay zone for agricultural land on the Gaviota Coast. The overlay zone could prevent conditional uses that are not compatible with maintaining the agricultural character of the Gaviota Coast.

Use the Coastal Plan update process as a forum for planning. The Local Coastal Plan is a powerful tool for providing public access to the coast, and protecting environmentally sensitive habitat, productive agricultural lands, scenic coastal landscapes and coastal dependent industry. Santa Barbara County's Coastal Plan (coastal plan) was approved in 1981, and doesn't reflect more recent development, policy changes, or resource information. The coastal plan is currently fourteen years overdue for a periodic review.



farmland, NPS photo

The County is already in the process of doing some updates to the Coastal Plan including resource mapping in the Ellwood area, and an application for Assistance Program grants to undertake a variety of coastal planning and management activities. Santa Barbara County could use a comprehensive process of updating the coastal plan to engage the Gaviota Coast area stakeholders in a collaborative process to find an appropriate balance among public access, habitat protection, agricultural operations, scenic resources, and coastal-dependent industry and commerce. The update process could become a forum for discussing and adopting new ideas about managing the coastal resources.

Establish an open space district. Regional open space districts generally are independent districts whose main function is to acquire, preserve, or maintain open space. They typically have taxing authority of some type, but can be funded by a variety of sources, including sales taxes, property taxes, real estate transfer taxes, transient occupancy taxes, bond measures, land grants, gifts, user fees, and debt financing measures.

A regional open space district could be established to provide an additional funding source for acquiring land and conservation easements in the

Open Space Districts

Some open space districts focus on acquiring and managing land. The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) (San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties) owns and manages over 44,000 acres of open space and 250 miles of trails. Other districts focus on easement acquisition, maintaining land in private ownership. The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District acquires land and easements, and then generally passes them on to an existing organization to manage. Only one percent of the 27,000 acres of land they have protected is open to the public.

Gaviota Coast area. A district could be structured primarily as a funding mechanism, providing funds or passing land or easements to existing public and private organizations for long-term management.

The concept of an open space district has been proposed for Santa Barbara County in the past, amid concerns about new taxes and duplication of efforts. However, an open space district could provide an opportunity for local generation of conservation funds, local control of priorities and activities, and public investment in the future of the Gaviota Coast. Formation of an open space district would require a successful ballot initiative.

Develop a Transfer of Development Rights

Program. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs are local, incentive-based programs that encourage land conservation by allowing landowners to sell or transfer the right to develop a parcel of land (the 'sending' parcel) to a parcel of land in another location (the 'receiving' parcel). Once development rights are transferred, development of the sending parcel is restricted with a permanent conservation easement. Development at higher densities is then allowed on the receiving parcel. Landowners are thus able to obtain equity from the development potential of their land while ensuring long-term protection of the land. Fifty jurisdictions nationwide have established transfer of development rights programs to conserve land.²⁷

Santa Barbara County could establish a TDR program. To do this, the county would need to identify sending and receiving areas, the types of transfers permitted, and zoning adjustments to create incentives for purchasing and selling development rights. Sending areas would be established in areas where less urban development is desired; receiving areas would be in locations with adequate services and infrastructure, where increased density is acceptable.

TDR programs allow a community to provide a previously agreed-upon amount of housing and other development, while reducing density in specific areas. The success of TDR programs is

generally dependent on the local government's ability to designate appropriate sending and receiving areas and establish the right incentives to encourage buying and selling. TDR programs are challenging to establish and administer.

Develop additional mechanisms for funding easement acquisition.

Santa Barbara County could develop a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program and use Installment Purchase Agreements (IPAs) to provide additional funding and flexibility for easement acquisition. Under a PDR program, a local government agency can set funds aside to purchase easements from landowners, using funding programs such as the California Farmland Conservancy Program. IPAs allow easements to be purchased on a payment plan over a period of 20-30 years. During this time landowners receive tax-exempt interest on the full amount of the purchase agreement. Landowners can end the agreement and accept a lump sum at any point in time.²⁸

Expand Marine Life Protection Areas. In July 2001, the California Department of Fish and Game released Initial Draft Concepts for Marine Protected Areas in California. These concepts have served as a starting point for a public planning process regarding potential new designated areas. Under Alternative 2, the local community could further develop and implement these concepts to protect significant near shore resources.

Areas within the study area that were initially identified as possible Marine Life Protection Areas include State Marine Parks at Point Conception and Refugio Beach, and a marine protected area at Naples. State Marine Parks allow recreational fishing, scientific collection, research, monitoring, and public recreation. State Marine Parks also provide protection of submerged historical and archeological resources and prohibit or restrict commercial fishing and marine extraction. A Conception State Marine Park would highlight the biological significance of Point Conception, and protect reefs, sandy bottoms, and kelp beds. A State Marine Park near Refugio State Beach would protect the reefs in this area which support high

levels of marine invertebrates and fish. A marine protection area at Naples would protect rocky reef, kelp beds, and sandy bottom habitat.²⁹

Pursue grants and assistance from existing NPS programs. Local government or non-profit organizations could request planning assistance from the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA). The RTCA program works with community groups and local and state governments to restore rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. Upon request, RTCA staff can contribute expertise in facilitation, public outreach, resource assessment, and coordination to local resource planning efforts. The NPS also administers recreation grants programs and offers technical assistance in the management of National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks.

5. PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT AND ACCESS

Under Alternative 2 existing public land management agencies could enhance and expand their capacity for resource protection and public access. The potential for new organizations and funding sources could also be explored.

Establish a State Land Conservancy for the Gaviota Coast. A state conservancy is an independent state agency established with a specific regional focus. Such a conservancy would fund or acquire and manage land in order to preserve open space or habitat, provide for low-impact recreational or educational uses, or other similar purposes. State conservancies are generally governed by a regional board, and funded by the state legislature and other public and private sources.

State Conservancy Models

Existing state conservancies which could serve as models include the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the San Joaquin River Conservancy, the Baldwin Hills Conservancy, and the California Tahoe Conservancy.

The California Legislative Analyst's Office recommends that the creation of additional conservancies be limited to areas that protect extraordinary natural resources of statewide significance. The Gaviota Coast study area includes resources of national significance and should be a high priority for a state conservancy, should the local community choose to pursue this option.³⁰

Local citizens could petition the state legislature to charter and fund a state Gaviota Conservancy, in order to bring additional state funds to the Gaviota Coast for land protection, management, and program coordination. Such a conservancy could acquire and manage land, or simply serve as a funding mechanism for the land acquisition, easement acquisition, and land management activities of other public and private organizations. Some of this function is already provided by the California Coastal Conservancy. A separate conservancy could be better positioned to advocate for funding for the Gaviota area, to seek funding from multiple sources, and to coordinate with other landowners and managers in the area on priorities for land and easement acquisition, public education and outreach programs, and resource management.

Strengthen protection of cultural and archeological resources. Many significant historic and archeological resources on both public and private land are not well documented or protected. While comprehensive inventories have been completed of cultural resources on Vandenberg AFB, the remainder of the study area is less well documented. Additional inventories, documentation and mapping of cultural sites could be undertaken both on public lands and on the land of willing private landowners. Information about sensitive sites need not be released to the public; details and locations may need to be withheld in order to protect the resources.

Few sites in the area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. More sites have been found eligible for such listing, while even more have not been assessed for their eligibility. Sites of local, state or national significance could be documented

and listed on the National Register. Sites of national significance could also be designated as National Historic Landmarks. Such designation would help to document the historical and archeological significance of the area. Designation could enhance funding and technical assistance opportunities, such as the Historic Preservation Fund, Save America's Treasures Fund and the California Heritage Fund. Private conservation efforts could be eligible for tax benefits.

The coastal ranching landscape is considered by Santa Barbara County to be one of the most outstanding and last remaining examples of an historic California coastal ranching landscape.³¹ However, no comparative studies of the cultural landscapes of the south coast portion of the study area have been undertaken. Cultural landscape studies could be completed in order to document the conditions, integrity and significance of the area, to help decision-makers understand which aspects of the landscape are most critical to protect, and to develop a plan for the management of the cultural landscapes.

Many sites within the study area are important to Chumash people. Chumash organizations such as the Coastal Band of Chumash Nations, Barbareño Chumash Council and the federally-recognized Santa Ynez Band of Chumash use ceremonial sites within the study area. These organizations and others could continue to work with landowners and managers to protect sacred sites and archeological resources, and to obtain access or



Tranquillon Peak, NPS photo

ownership of important sites for ceremonial, interpretive, and educational purposes. They could work with the US Coast Guard or subsequent owners to develop interpretive opportunities at Point Conception.

Focus additional resources on coastal trail planning and development. A state land conservancy or open space district could facilitate Santa Barbara County's efforts to dedicate additional resources to the planning and development of the coastal trail and complete high priority sections as quickly as possible. Priority sections could include: 1) westward from Goleta, in order to provide close-to-home trail opportunities for urban residents; 2) outward from existing parks and trail segments, in order to connect trail and park uses; and 3) trail connections to significant resources suitable for public visitation. Key areas that have received attention and interest include the area from Refugio State Beach to Gaviota State Park, and south from Jalama Beach County Park to Point Conception and Cojo Bay.

Where this proposed trail route crosses private property, cooperation, communication, creative thinking, and flexibility are likely to be needed on all sides in order to identify opportunities for access to the coastline, without compromise of fragile resources or productive use of private property. In the short term, some sections may need to be routed along existing public roads, including U.S. Highway 101. In some areas, the coastal trail may be able to be developed alongside existing rail lines (the "Rails with Trails" concept). However, in many areas, the land is too steep and hazardous and the rail line is too close to the coast or bluffs to safely add a pathway. The marking of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, which follows the coast for much of the study area, could occur in conjunction with coastal trail development.

Develop additional coast-to-crest and coast-to-viewpoint trails. The county could work to create connector trails from the coastal trail up the canyons to significant viewpoints or to the Los Padres National Forest in several locations. Trail

acquisition and development could be accomplished working cooperatively with private property owners, State Parks and the Los Padres National Forest to acquire trail rights of way and easements to provide non-motorized recreational trails. Any trail development should be done in consultation and cooperation with landowners. It should respect the working agricultural landscape and unique resources of the Gaviota Coast³² and avoid areas where privacy and agricultural operations would be negatively impacted. In some areas there may be opportunities for public acquisition of broader parkland connections from the coast to the forest.

Two logical trail locations are on county-owned property at Baron Canyon Ranch near Tajiguas and at Ferren Road near Ellwood. These trails are identified as proposed recreation trails by the County of Santa Barbara. The county completed a feasibility study for a coast to crest trail on the county's Baron Canyon Ranch property that would connect the coastal trail to the Los Padres National Forest.³³

El Capitan Ranch, newly acquired by California State Parks, connects El Capitan State Beach with the Los Padres National Forest. Trail connections from the coast to the forest are likely; such decisions will be made as state parks completes a general plan for the park over the next few years.

Arroyo Hondo Ranch, recently acquired by the LTSBC, also reaches from the coast to the Los Padres National Forest. A trail through the ranch could connect to the Los Padres National Forest trail system. It could be routed to allow appreciation of riparian and canyon habitats, while avoiding negative impacts.

The owners of Rancho Dos Vistas have indicated their intention to dedicate a trail easement through this property to connect with trails on other public land. The 650-acre easement on El Capitan Ranch will also include a dedicated recreational trail easement.

The Brinkman property, which has been offered for

sale in recent times, provides logical trail routes from Gaviota State Park to the Los Padres National Forest, as well as other possible trail options. A land trust or public agency could pursue acquisition of trail routes or easements in conjunction with any future sale of the property.

Develop additional coastal access

opportunities. The coastal land below the mean high tide line, and the first three miles of ocean, are considered public trust resources, and thus belong to all the people of California. Additional access points to these public resources could be developed. This should be done in cooperation and consultation with landowners and should respect privacy concerns and avoid areas where agricultural operations would be negatively impacted. Additional access has been proposed at a number of sites, and could become available in conjunction with sale or development of some of these properties:

- The old Arco site now owned by the Dos Pueblos Associates, in conjunction with proposed golf course or other development or sale
- Las Varas Ranch – if sold or developed
- Eagle Canyon – if sold or developed
- Naples – under consideration with residential development being planned
- The Gaviota Oil and Gas Processing Facility near Gaviota State Park - if decommissioned in the future. The county or state could acquire the land, take advantage of some of the existing infrastructure, and develop public access to the beach, a campground or interpretive or cultural center.
- Point Sal - the county could improve public access from Brown Road to Point Sal State Beach and county-owned lands at Point Sal.

Enhance state and county park systems and programs.

The state and county park systems could seek opportunities to acquire significant resource lands and to provide recreational and coastal access opportunities.

The City of Goleta, Santa Barbara County, University of California, Trust for Public Land, a private developer and others are working on proposals to protect the area encompassing the UCSB Devereux Reserve, monarch butterfly preserve and extensive bluff lands and beach at the edge of the urban area. These proposals, if implemented, would provide additional beach access and recreational facilities at the edge of the urban area where such facilities are most likely to be fully utilized.

Camping facilities at Gaviota State Park could be expanded in a way that reduces impacts on natural resources while expanding capacity. The wetland and floodplain of Gaviota Creek could then be restored.

Jalama Beach County Park may soon be expanded under a Bixby Ranch Company proposal to donate additional acreage to the park. Additional opportunities for expanding this park could be explored if they become available.

Point Conception lighthouse is likely to be declared surplus federal property within the next few years, and made available for management by others



monarch butterfly preserve, NPS photo

through the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Program. If appropriate access can be negotiated with the Bixby Ranch Company, the lighthouse, outbuildings and surrounding land could be adapted for limited educational and interpretive uses, and possibly for overnight accommodations. The BLM California Coastal National Monument, California State Parks, Santa Barbara County, and a number of non-profit organizations could be considered as potential stewards for the area.

Enhance federal agencies involvement with surrounding communities. The Los Padres National Forest leadership has expressed interest in working more closely with interested local landowners and organizations in collaborative land management and resource protection, educational and interpretive programs, and public access. Los Padres National Forest could acquire lands within their authorized boundary to protect recreational and wildlife corridors. Acquisition would be from willing sellers only, with priority on lands most valuable for resource management and recreation.

The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail could take advantage of additional opportunities for public education and interpretation if additional coastal open space were protected, and additional sections of the Coastal Trail were completed.

6. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE

Under Alternative 2, Vandenberg AFB could work through partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions and non-profits to expand and enhance their public access and education programs.

Vandenberg AFB has been an excellent steward of the natural and cultural resources under their care and plans to continue to dedicate substantial staff to resource management. Vandenberg AFB has also provided limited public access to specific areas within and on the edges of the base. VAFB could seek opportunities to increase public access to specific areas of the base in ways that don't threaten natural or cultural resources or the safety and security of the base.

Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Beach are adjacent to Vandenberg AFB, and provide critical shoreline access to north county residents. However, due to beach closures for endangered species protection, access is very limited during the time of the year when demand is heaviest - from March to September of each year. Vandenberg AFB and County Parks could work together and with other interests to identify other areas of the base that might be suitable for increased public access managed by County Parks. Possible candidates include Minuteman Beach and the Sudden Ranch area. All public access to areas within and near the base would be subject to closure for safety and security purposes.

The County and Vandenberg AFB could work together to develop workable approaches to routing the California Coastal Trail and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail through the base. Access by permit or guided by permitted organizations could allow limited and responsible access, while addressing safety, security and natural and cultural resource concerns.

Vandenberg AFB could work with non-profit conservation and education organizations to allow guided tours of the base in order to increase public appreciation and understanding of the base's natural resources, historic sites, and current missions. Such tours could be subject to approval of the base commander in terms of locations, frequency, numbers, and closures for safety, security and resource management purposes.



top: lifeboat rescue station, NPS photo
bottom: Sudden Ranch main house, NPS photo